



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director & Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

June 15, 2023

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tiffany Ward".

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-103
FY23 Capital Budget Montgomery County Public Schools Technology Modernization
(No. 036510)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-103 FY23 Capital Budget Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Technology Modernization (Tech Mod) (No. 036510) has the potential to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County as it targets resources to households most burdened by the digital divide to help increase access to computers and reduce opportunity and achievement gaps in education such as the Homework Gap. Of note, the absence of demographic data makes it difficult to determine to what extent this supplemental will mitigate racial disparities in educational outcomes for low-income MCPS students identified as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC).

- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-103 FY23 Capital Budget MCPS Tech Mod (No. 036510) is to provide funding in the amount of \$623,758 to cover technology costs incurred by schools that are eligible under the federal E-Rate rebates program¹. Offering rebates on internet and telecommunication service costs enables MCPS to expand student access to technology through the purchase of hardware and software as part of the larger technology modernization plan—funding the cost of internet, access points, routers, switches, hubs, wiring, repairs, and upkeep of eligible internal connections.

¹ Federal Communications Commission. *E-Rate: Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries*. 2021. Available at: <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/universal-service-program-schools-and-libraries-e-rate>

The Tech Mod (No. 036510) project is a key component of the MCPS strategic technology plan, Educational Technology for 21st Century Learning² which builds upon the following goals:

- students will use technology to become actively engaged in learning;
- schools will address the digital divide through equitable access to technology;
- staff will improve technical skills through professional development; and
- staff will use technology to improve productivity and results.³

Funding E-Rate requests such as this are vital as they have the ability to support efforts aimed at mitigating the digital divide and homework gap—initiatives previously supported with Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds.

ORESJ has previously provided analysis on the digital divide and the homework gap in its Racial Equity Impact Statement (REIA) of [Supplemental Appropriation #22-94 Montgomery Connects Computer Grant Funding \(MCPL & TEBS\)](#). This REIA notes that even prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, students of color faced technology-related barriers to academic achievement that – without intervention – could exacerbate existing education and opportunity gaps. Additional resources documenting inequities in educational opportunity and resources impacting the experiences of BIPOC students in the County – particularly those that are low-income – can be found in the following REIAs:

1. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-05 MCPS Major Capital Projects – Secondary (P652102) <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-05.pdf>
2. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-25 MCPS SAC Fund <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-25.pdf>
3. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-86 FY23 Operating Budget American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund – Homeless Children and Youth Grant <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-86.pdf>

Additionally, ORESJ developed a Capital Improvements Program Budget Equity Tool (CIP BET) and Guidance Manual⁴ to help stakeholders in Montgomery County incorporate a

² Montgomery County Public Schools. *Reimagining myLearning in a Connected Age: Montgomery County Public Schools Strategic Technology Plan*. Available at:

https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/district/departments/technology/strategic_tech_plan.pdf

³ Montgomery County, MD Government, Office of Management and Budget. *Technology Modernization*. 2023. Available at: <https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/BASISCAPITAL/Common/Project.aspx?ID=P036510>

⁴ The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. *Guidance Manual: FY24 Capital Improvements Program Budget Equity Tool*. 2022. Available at: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ORE/Resources/Files/CIP_EquityTool_101322_PS2.pdf

racial equity lens into CIP project development and resource decisions. Best practices for using a racial equity tool, such as the CIP BET, suggest that the tool should be used early and often in project development and involve a diverse set of project stakeholders—including community members and intended beneficiaries of the program.

During the FY23-28 CIP budget submission cycle, MCPS stated in their CIP BET response for CIP project No. 036510 “Yes, this project aligns with the County’s policy to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities” however, the response was not accompanied by any substantive evidence to support this claim, with the remaining CIP BET response having not been completed. Given the Tech Mod project’s potential to reduce racial inequities and disparities for BIPOC MCPS students, ORESJ offers the following observations for consideration when utilizing both our CIP BET and REIA tools:

What racial disparities or inequities in Montgomery County does this project seek to reduce or eliminate?

As previously stated in the program’s response to the FY23 CIP BET, CIP project No. 036510 does align with the County’s policy to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities, however, a specific racial disparity or inequity was not identified. Supplemental information accompanying this supplemental request suggests that MCPS students (and their families) who lack access to both hardware and software beyond the school day are the primary beneficiaries of the project. Data included in the REIA of [Supplemental Appropriation #22-94 Montgomery Connects Computer Grant Funding \(MCPL & TEBS\)](#) finds that larger percentages of Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native households – compared to White and Asian households – do not have access to high-speed internet or a computer at home⁵. As such, strategic implementation of CIP project No. 036510 has the potential to reduce the digital divide and educational achievement gaps for BIPOC MCPS students and their families.

How does this project address the racial disparities and inequities you described?

While addressing racial disparities and inequities was not identified in both this supplemental request and the FY23 CIP BET response, as previously noted, a key component of the MCPS strategic technology plan, Educational Technology for 21st Century Learning, identifies addressing the digital divide through equitable access to technology in schools as a goal. By targeting outreach efforts, structural inequities disproportionately impacting low-income households and households of color in accessing education-related technology in the County can work in service of this goal.

⁵ All4Ed. *Homework Gap*. 2020. Available at: <https://all4ed.org/publication/homeworkgap/>

June 15, 2023

Page 4 of 4

Does this project (including its development, construction, or implementation) have the potential to create any unintended consequences?

CIP project No. 036510 has the ability to provide additional teaching and learning technology that will especially benefit low-income BIPOC students who lack access to the internet and/or a home computer, in addition to their families and teachers. Connecting these students and their families to technology resources extending beyond the school day reduces the digital divide and mitigates achievement gaps. Implementing the program in a culturally responsive manner that prioritizes the needs of these students works to maximize these resources' impacts on advancing equitable outcomes within the MCPS system.

cc: Monifa McKnight, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools
Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnership, Office of the County Executive